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The author examines the "most promising" approach to educating American Indian students--bilingual education, which uses some combination of the student's mother tongue and English to transmit academic content and to foster the child's development in both languages. Interest in bilingual education, or at least in the inclusion of mother tongue in BIA (Bureau of Indian Affairs) schools goes back to the late thirties. A simplified Navajo alphabet was developed; a pre-primer, primer, and first reader in English and Navajo were written and used in reservation schools. Other materials in Navajo--technical programs for adult education, a newspaper and dictionary--were followed by bilingual texts in Hopi and Sioux. English-Spanish texts were also prepared, in response to requests from Pueblo and Papago leaders. (It was assumed in using these texts that reading and writing would be taught first in the child's mother tongue, and written English taught only after control of oral English had been achieved.) The "Five-Year Program," begun in the mid-forties by the BIA; ongoing bilingual programs in Navajo and Hopi; as well as various proposed programs, including Alaskan, are discussed in this paper. (AMM)

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BILINGUAL EDUCATION IN BIA SCHOOLS

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Bilingual Education in BIA Schools

A combination of depressing academic achievement-test results, and an interest in innovative and possibly successful programs around the country involving students that have much in common with our own, has led the Bureau of Indian Affairs to a serious examination of approaches to educating Indian students which may hold a greater promise of success than we have enjoyed in the past. The most promising of these approaches is that of bilingual education, i.e., the use of some combination of the student's mother tongue and English to transmit academic content, and to foster the child's development in both languages.

We've examined Florida's Dade County program closely and feel that although many of the problems of Cuban refugee students are quite different from those of American Indians, much of what is being done can be adapted to our situation. The same is true of Thomas Horn's bilingual project being carried on through the University of Texas and the San Antonio Schools. We've looked at Rough Rock School, where, although we have little as yet in the way of test results, we have a great deal of popular approval of the school's inclusion of native tongue and culture and its involvement with the community.

Of interest to us also have been the research findings of Modiano in Mexico (1), of Grieve and Taylor in Ghana (2), of Pedro Orata in the Phil-

ippines (3) and of Tore Osterberg in Sweden (4), all of which seem to support the superiority of at least initial mother-tongue instruction.

We've been impressed, too, with the proliferation of staff training opportunities. This year, the Experienced Teacher Fellowship section of the EPDA includes four programs in bilingual education, among them a year's fellowship under the direction of Miles V. Zintz at the University of New Mexico, which includes bilingual instruction methods and materials development for teachers of Indian as well as Spanish-speaking pupils. Summer workshops in bilingual education are being offered by the University of Arizona, San Diego County, and Southwest Texas State College.

Interest in bilingual education, or at least in the inclusion of mother-tongue in the classroom, is not new in the Bureau. Reversing what had been a long-established policy in the treatment of American natives, i.e., their assimilation into the mainstream culture at the cost of their culture, their language, and their separate identity, the Bureau, under the direction of Willard W. Beatty, set out in the late thirties to promote native-tongue literacy among Indian adults and young people. At that time, almost 9 out of every 10 Navajos were non-English speaking and the need to convey information to adult Navajos had become acute (5). In addition, there was a growing awareness of the failure of Indian children to adapt to an English-

language curriculum at the beginning levels.

An alphabet limited to the keys found on a modern typewriter (thereby eliminating a number of symbols which had been used previously and greatly simplifying the diacritical markings) was developed by Oliver LaFarge, the novelist and Dr. John P. Harrington, a linguist with the Smithsonian Institute. A pre-primer, primer, and first reader in English and Navajo titled Little Man's Family, with text by J. B. Enochs, a former Bureau teacher, was followed by the Little Herder stories and the Prairie Dog Fairy Tale by Ann Nolan Clark, another Bureau teacher (6). Preparation of the Navajo text was handled by Robert Young, Edward Kennard, Willetto Antonio, and Adolph Bitany. In the fall of 1940, Kennard, Young and Bitany began to introduce the reading and writing of Navajo into reservation schools (7). Materials prepared for adults included accounts of technical programs such as soil conservation, livestock management, water development, health, sanitation, and disease control. Native Navajo speakers were taught to read and write Navajo and were then employed to work as interpreters with doctors, scientists, teachers, and other technicians (8).

A monthly newspaper printed in Navajo proved valuable in communicating to the Navajo information on activities of the Tribal Council, as well as

national and world news (9).

A Navajo-English dictionary was also published at this time and proved valuable to native interpreters in their attempts to understand the technical vocabularies they were dealing with.

In addition to the Navajo materials for students, bilingual readers were written and printed for the Hopi (10) and for the Sioux (11). In response to requests from Pueblo and Papago leaders, English-Spanish texts were also prepared (12). Using these texts, it was assumed that reading and writing would be taught first in the child's mother tongue and attempted in English only after control of oral English had been achieved (13).

There is little to be found in the way of evaluation of this literacy program. In 1944, Robert Young, writing in Indian Education, a Bureau field letter, found the results of the use of native language in the classroom "highly encouraging". Teachers had lost their fears and misgivings and people in remote reservation areas were welcoming written Navajo and requesting that it be used for all forms and regulations so that they would know what they were being asked to sign. Young felt there was good reason to believe that writing would spread among the Navajo. He expressed hopes that the Navajo themselves would ultimately become the authors and that the Navajo language would serve their needs until such time as they no longer had need for it (14). Hildegard Thompson, former Director of Education for the

Bureau, feels that the status of many of the present-day Navajo Council members is due to their fluency and literacy in Navajo resulting from this program. She also points out that the bilingual readers served as a valuable link between home and school since children were encouraged to take their readers home and read to their illiterate parents. It is likely that this may well have been the beginning of a change in the feelings of Navajo parents toward the schools which had always seemed so alien (15).

World War II, with its drain on personnel and funds seems to have been at least partially responsible for the end of the native literacy program. Many of the linguists and native teachers who had been involved were assigned to the Army Special Services Branch to teach Indians. (It is interesting to note that the Navajo language was used as an Army code--one which was never deciphered by the Japanese (16).)

A second example of a Bureau project which made use of native language is the Five-Year Program which began in the mid-forties. This was a period in which it was not possible to accommodate in the immediate area all the Navajo children who desired schooling and as a consequence, a large part of a generation was growing up illiterate. Space was available in Bureau boarding schools in other areas and this was made available to Navajo youths from 12-16 years of age with little or no previous schooling. Since most of these students had no English, it was necessary to make

extensive use of Navajo. In the first three years of this program, a teaching team consisting of an English-speaking teacher and a native-speaking instructional aide, gave instruction in Navajo and English. Ideas were first introduced in Navajo by the aides, and followed up by an English presentation. As students progressed, the amount of English increased. However, even after English became the chief medium of instruction, Navajo was still employed to determine how well students had understood the material presented to them in English.

The Five-Year Program expanded to an enrollment of over 5,000 pupils annually, spread over eight schools, and was highly successful in terms of finding employment for its graduates. It is felt that this success would not have been possible without the heavy reliance on the use of Navajo speakers and the Navajo language (17).

Although native-speaking aides have been responsible for some form of bilingual instruction in Bureau schools for many years, it has only been in the past few years that planned programs of instruction involving mother tongue and English and extending beyond the beginning levels have resumed the trend initiated in the thirties and forties.

Last year, a Title III-sponsored program at the Bureau day school in Taos, New Mexico, attributing their failure in teaching reading to a lack of oral mastery of English, attempted to teach reading in native tongue first--

Tiwa in this case. Tiwa was also used as the language of classroom instruction, with a period of oral English as a part of each day. A special orthography including the phonemes of both Tiwa and English was taught to beginning and first-grade pupils who began reading with a familiar Tiwa story. The plan included introducing Roman orthography in the second and third grades with a continuation of the special script both for the introduction of new work and continued reading in Tiwa (18).

Other aspects of the program were the inclusion of Indian culture and the use of modern math curriculum with emphasis on manipulation and concrete experience to provide the basis for later verbal abstractions.

Because of staff difficulties and community conflict, the program was discontinued after its first year and no satisfactory evaluation was made.

Both Rough Rock and Rock Point, Bureau elementary schools located in Arizona, have been including in their programs reading instruction in Navajo and Navajo culture. Rough Rock also has formal instruction in Navajo-as-a-second-language for non-Navajo speakers (19).

After experimenting with various ways of using Navajo in the classroom--small group reading and talking in Navajo with older children, math and social studies help in Navajo for younger children--Wayne Holm,

Rock Point's principal, submitted a proposal for a bilingual program outlining the following plan of operation as feasible.

Navajo Beginners would be taught to read in Navajo using Irvy Goosen's Let's Read Navajo and locally-prepared readiness materials.

Navajo Beginners, first- and second-graders would be taught science, social studies, and health in Navajo with summaries in English. By the third and fourth grades, English would become the language of instruction, with Navajo being used when necessary, with the exception of fifth- and sixth-grade units on Navajo studies, which would continue to be taught in Navajo. Mr. Holm suggests that activities having to do with Navajo mythology, singing, dancing, and public speaking might be offered as voluntary after-school activities. Navajo-speaking aides or teachers would work closely with English-speaking teachers in the lower elementary grades.

Mr. Holm's program is in effect at this time and we should have an evaluation of it by the end of this year. It seems very likely that if the program is measurably successful, it may well serve as a model for other programs of this nature on the Navajo reservation.

A contract with the Northern Arizona Supplementary Education Center (NASEC) in Flagstaff, Arizona has revived the development of native literacy

materials begun in the thirties. NASEC is currently developing bilingual primary texts, filmstrips and tapes in Hopi and English. The stories used in the texts are being recorded from native informants and transcribed in native tongue and English. At present, pre-school materials and primary texts are being prepared and plans are to go on to intermediate and secondary levels in the future.

NASEC plans to use native-speaking teachers and aides, who, after being taught to read in the vernacular, will teach older students. The more able students will then, under supervision, teach the younger children. A selected group of schools will be used to try out the materials which will then be evaluated, revised and offered for general use (20).

The interest generated by the Bureau's bilingual efforts of the past few years and indeed, the national and international attention given to bilingual programs involving all groups who do not enter school with a command of the national language, make it likely that these programs will continue and expand.

Plans for a pilot, bilingual kindergarten program for Navajo children, beginning in the fall of this year and involving six classes, are being made at the present time. On October 11, 12, 1968, the first of two project planning meetings was held at the Center for Applied Linguistics in Washington, D.C.

The Center invited specialists in early childhood education, linguistics, psycholinguistics, anthropology, ESL and related fields. The first meeting was devoted to the educational, cultural and linguistic goals of such a program, to curriculum content, to problems related to the use of Navajo as a medium of instruction and to the use and teaching of English in kindergarten activities. The preparation of Navajo and non-Navajo teachers was discussed at the remaining sessions (21).

Here again, if the pattern of bilingualism adopted for the experimental kindergartens is successful, we may have a model on which to base all Bureau kindergartens, and from which to build a continuing program at the first- and second-grade levels.

Although Navajo has been the chief area of concentration in the past, and will most likely continue to be so because of the size of its population, there has been much interest recently in Alaskan native groups. A project has been submitted which proposes to develop curriculum materials for the teaching of Inupiat (Northern Eskimo) and Kutchin and upper Tanana (Athabascan) Alaskan native dialects at the fourth-grade level. This program would, over a five-year period, prepare similar materials down through the first year (22).

The Juneau Area of the BIA is preparing a bilingual proposal at this

time and it is likely that others from this area will follow. Both the Rock Point and Rough Rock experiments will continue to develop, with increased emphasis being put on evaluation, especially in the areas of reading and ESL.

On the basis of research conducted with other non-English-speaking groups, which leads us to believe that a child reads more easily in a second language if he has first made the association of the written symbols with the sounds of his first language, the area of reading research is high on the Bureau's list of priorities. A study of the problems of teaching English in Bureau schools done by the Center for Applied Linguistics in 1967, made the recommendation that:

> " . . . three pilot classes in reading the mother tongue be initiated in comparable schools, with children of the same age and approximate ability who know no English and whose native languages are different, and that these classes be matched with control classes whose introduction to reading is in English." (23).

As soon as it is feasible to do so, this will be pursued in greater depth.

The problems of providing bilingual programs for Indian students no longer seem insurmountable, although, certainly time and adequate funding

will be needed to lay the groundwork. Some materials exist for the Navajo, Hopi, Sioux, and Eskimo but texts for other groups can be developed only after extensive descriptive work and the development of a suitable orthography.

The training of native-speaking personnel to assume major responsibility for classrooms will also require time and funds but internship programs which make it possible for natives to further their education, and an increasing interest on the part of native aides in becoming professionals, are making inroads.

Decisions must eventually be made as to the type of bilingual program which is best for our students. Of interest is a comparative study now being made by the Southwestern Cooperative Educational Laboratory (SWCEL) in Albuquerque, examining the effectiveness of four different combinations of Navajo and English with Navajo children in grades one through three. In one approach, for example, all aspects of the program would begin in Navajo and gradually shifted over to English during a two-year period. In another, the oral language program would be in English from the beginning with content instruction in Navajo and a gradual phasing into English over approximately a one-year period. In this approach, reading, which would be begun after six months of the first year, would be entirely in English (24).

One of the major problems at this point, is, I believe, one of determining

objectives which, in turn, will effect our decisions on curriculum content and method. Whereas Dade County and San Antonio are educating students for participation in truly bilingual societies with a strong possibility of students receiving even post-high school work in mother tongue, it is unlikely, at least in the near future, that even our largest group, the Navajo, will find themselves part of a truly bilingual Navajo-English culture in the Southwest. And, outside of the New Navajo Junior College, temporarily located at Many Farms, Arizona, use of the Navajo language for higher education does not seem practicable.

If we were to define our goals for bilingual education with our Indian students at this point, which may well be a premature one, I think the use of mother tongue would be considered most useful as an effective bridge to eventual instruction in English and as a means of avoiding both the progressive academic retardation so common in our Indian students and the damage to their self image induced by the rejection of native language a nd culture.

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